

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0822

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MA, US

SUBJECT: ANTI-U.S. COMMENTARY IN MALAGASY PRESS

SUMMARY: IN COURSE OF PROTESTING ANTI-U.S. STATEMENTS IN LEADING TANANARIVE DAILY, PAO OBTAINED CONFIRMATION FROM MALAGASY EDITOR THAT ANTI-U.S. PRESS STATEMENTS ARE REFLECTIONS OF MALAGASY INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE. EDITOR ALSO SAID THAT FOUR PAPERS OF PRO-SOVIET AKFM PARTY ARE SOVIET-FINANCED.

END SUMMARY

1. ON APRIL 25, LEADING TANANARIVE DAILY, FRENCH AND MALAGASY LANGUAGE MADAGASCAR MATIN (CIRCULATION: 23,000) FRONT PAGED TWO PICTURES UNDER THE HEADLINE "KHMER PEOPLE'S VICTORY OVER IMPERIALISM." ACCORDING TO THE CAPTIONS, ONE OF PICUTRES FEATURED SIHANOUK AND HIS WIFE BEING CONGRATULATED IN PEKING BY FOREIGN DIPLOMATS "AFTER FALL OF CAMBODIAN CAPITAL, EMPTIED OF PUPPETS OF IMPERIALISM." SECOND PHOTO REPRESENTED A "DELIRIOUS DEMONSTRATION OF POPULATION OF POIPET, VILLAGE AT CAMBODIAN-THAI BORDER, ON ARRIVAL OF RED KHMERS. CAPTION ALSO SAID: "THE VALIANT KHMER PEOPLE RELISHING THEIR GREAT VICTORY OVER AMERICAN IMPERIALISM."

2. AMBASSADOR INSTRUCTED PAO RAZI TO PROTEST AGAINST THIS
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OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE AND TO ASK FOR EXPLANATION FROM MAD MATIN (MM) DIRECTOR JACQUES ANDRIAMBELO.

3. THIS IS WHAT ANDRIAMBELO TOLD RAZI ON LATTER'S VIST TO

MAD MATIN OFFICES ON APRIL 30: QUOTE WE DON'T ADMIT IT AND WE DENY IT WHEN OTHERS SAY IT; BUT OPPOSITION BETWEEN HIGH PLATEAUS AND COASTAL AREAS IS REAL. IT IS IN FACT CARDINAL FEATURE OF ENTIRE MALAGASY POLITICAL SCENE. PRESENT MILITARY DIRECTORATE HAS DECIDED TO PAY GREATER ATTENTION TO COTIERS AND TO THEIR NEEDS. IT HAS ALSO OPTED FOR FOKONOLONA SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAMPIONED BY LATE RATSIMANDRAVA. HIGH PLATEAUS PEOPLE PAY LIP SERVICE TO FOKONOLONA BECAUSE RATSIMANDRAVA WAS ONE OF THEIRS. IN FACT, THEY ARE AGAINST FOKONOLONA BECUASE THEY THINK THAT IT FAVORS COTIERS; THEY ARE ALSO SERIOUSLY WORRIED ABOUT DIRECTORATE'S RECENT DECISION TO INTRODUCE FOKONOLONA SYSTEM IN URBAN AREAS, TANANARIVE INCLUDED. AWARE OF DISPLEASURE OF HIGH PLATEAUS PEOPLE, DIRECTORATE IS TRYING TO PLACATE THEM AND SOOTHE THEIR FEELINGS BY HARDENING ITS ANTI-WESTERN POSTURE AND PROPAGANDA. TO THIS EFFECT, THEY ARE REQUESTING OUR COOPERATION. ON APRIL 15, SEVERAL HIGH FUNCTIONARIES FROM MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CAME TO MY OFFICE. THEY REQUESTED THAT (A) TWO CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES TO PRINCE SIHANOUK AND THE GRP SIGNED BY RATSIRAKA BE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED AND (B) MM GIVE BETTER PLAY TO VICTORIES AGAINST AMERICAN IMPERIALISM IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. THIS IS WHY WE PUBLISHED TWO LARGE PHOTOGRAPHS OF RATSIRAKA IN OUR ISSUE OF APRIL 16 CARRYING HIS MESSAGES TO SIHANOUK AND GRP AND THIS EXPLAINS THE WORDING OF OUR CAPTIONS ON APRIL 25. I ACCEPT YOUR PROTESTATIONS AND I AM SINCERELY UNHAPPY TO HAVE CAUSED AMBASSADOR MENDENHALL'S DISPLEASURE; BUT YOU TOO MUST UNDERSTAND OUR SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES. WE LIVE UNDER CENSORSHIP AND WE MUST ABIDE BY MILITARY DIRECTORATE'S DEMANDS. MOREOVER, WE ARE COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE AND A TANANARIVE NEWSPAPER; IN ORDER TO SURVIVE WE MUST MAKE COMPROMISES. 60 PERCENT OF MATIN'S OWNERSHIP IS MALAGASY; YET, WE ARE ATTACKED DAILY BY OUR MALAGASY LANGUAGE COMPETITION FOR BEING FRENCH, PRO-IMPERIALIST AND PRO-CAPITALIST. WHEN OUR OFFICES WERE BURNT DURING MAY 1972 EVENTS WE CONSIDERED MOVING OUT OF THIS HIGH PLATEAU ATMOSPHERE AND ESTABLISH OUR NEWSPAPER IN ONE OF COASTAL CENTERS, TAMATAVE OR MAJUNGA. WE GAVE UP IDEA BECAUSE NOWHERE

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ELSE THAN IN TANANARIVE ARE THERE ENOUGH EPOPLE WHO CAN AFFORD TO PAY 40 FRANCS FOR THEIR DAILY NEWSPAPER." END QUOTE.

4. RAZI EXPRESSED REGRET AT CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED BY ANDRIAMBELO AND AT PREVAILING ATMOSHPERE OF INTIMIDATION WHICH, ACCORDING TO MATIN, OBLIGED IT TO MISINFORM ITS READERS. RAZI ASLO SAID WHILE HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE STRONG RESENTMENT OF MERINAS, HIGH PLATEAUS PEOPLE, AGAINST FRENCH WHO HAD

DISPOSSESSED THEM IN 1895, THEIR MERINA ANTI-AMERICANISM AS DESCRIBED BY ANDRIAMBELO WAS BEYOND HIS COMPRESENSION. WEREN'T THE MERINAS THE MALAGASY "BOURGEOIS"? WHY WAS ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA SUCH SWEET MUSIC TO THEIR EARS THAT IT

MADE THEM FOREGET EVEN POSSIBLE LOSS OF THEIR PRESENT PRIVILEGED POSITION TO COTIERS?

5. ANDRIAMBELO SMILED FOR A LONG WHILE AND HE FINALLY SAID: QUOTE AT INDEPENDENCE, TSIRANANA, A COTIER, CAME TO POWER. HE WAS PRO-WEST. HE SHUNNED THE COMMUNISTS. HE HAD NO RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. OUR HIGH PLATEAUS PEOPLE NEVER LIKED TSIRANANA, NEVER ACCEPTED HIM. BOURGEOIS OR FARMERS, SICK AND POOR, THE MERINAS SUPPORTED THE AKFM, WHOSE LEADER, REVEREND ANDRIAMANJATO, IS MAYOR OF TANANARIVE. IN OPPOSITION TO TSIRANANA, THE AKFM TOOK A PRO-SOVIET STAND. THE SOVIETS, IN TURN, HAVE GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED THE AKFM. THE (MANY) AKFM NEWSPAPERS ARE PUBLISHED WITH SOVIET MONEY; AND, I CAN TELL YOU, IT TAKES QUITE A DEAL OF MONEY TO RUN A NEWSPAPER. END QUOTE.

6. ANOTHER PROMINENT TANANARIVE NEWSPAPERMAN, MR. RALAIARI-JAONA, CONFIRMED INTIMIDATING PRESSURE THAT AKFM HAS EXERTED ON MALAGASY PRESS DURING CONVERSATION THAT HE HAD WITH RAZI AT USIS ON APRIL 25. RALAIRIJAONA IS EDITOR IN CHIEF OF INDEPENDENT MALAGASY LANGUAGE DAILY MARESAKA (CIRCULATION 5,500) AND PRESIDENT OF ASSOCIATION OF MALAGASY JOURNALISTS.

7. A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT ON ANDRIAMBELO AND RALAIARIJAONA CONVERSATIONS WILL BE FILED SEPARATELY IN FORTHCOMING USIS FIELD MESSAGE ENTITLED: "MORE ON THE MALAGASY PRESS: THE SOVIET INFLUENCE."

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IM EMBASSY COMMENTS:

A. WE BELIEVE PRESSURE BEING EXERTED ON MADAGASCAR MATIN TO ATTACK AMERICANS AS "IMPERIALISTS" COMES FROM RATSIRAKA VIA HIS SUPPORTERS IN FONOFF. AS WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED, CONSIDERABLE DICHOTOMY HAS DEVELOPED WITHIN GOMR BETWEEN THOSE SUPPORTING RATSIRAKA AND THOSE OPPOSED TO HIM.

B. IT IS CLEAR FROM FURTHER MADAGASCAR MATIN ARTICLES AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF MAY 2 AND 5 THAT PAO'S APPROACH TO EDITOR ON BEHALF AMBASSADOR HAS NOT LED TO CESSATION OF BELABORING OF U.S. AS "IMPERIALIST" OR OF GLOATING OVER OUR DEFEATS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM.
MENDENHALL

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